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AUTHOR VanFossen, Phillip J.

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ABSTRACT

Technological resources abound for teachers of all subject areas, but for many reasons, such instructional technology seems to lend itself well to the social studies including economics. To help teachers efficiently use the latest economics resources available on the World Wide Web, this Digest identifies four sites that offer knowledge of economic concepts and principles and lesson plans to teach them. The four sites are: (1) the National Council on Economic Education Website; (2) EcEdWeb developed by the University of Nebraska (Omaha) Center for Economic Education; (3) CyberTeach; and (4) CyberEconomics. To help students acquire knowledge and gather information about economics, the Digest features six sites some of which provide access to up-to-the-minute information and others offer interactive instructional activities. The information sites are: (1) USA Today's Economy Track; (2) Orley Amos' Pedestrian's Guide to the Economy; and (3) EconomicsMinute. The instructional activities sites are: (1) NetNewsLine; (2) SMG 2000; and (3) Escape from Knab. (JH)

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812-855-3838 • 800-266-3815

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World Wide Web Resources for Teaching and Learning Economics

by Phillip J. VanFossen

We live in an information-rich society, one in which, via various forms of technology, information on almost any topic can be obtained nearly instantaneously. The proliferation of such information technology has begun to make its way into the nation's schools in the form of, among other things, instructional resources such as videodiscs, CD-ROMs and other computer-driven materials, and the nearly ubiquitous World Wide Web (WWW). Indeed, in 1996, 64% of schools nationwide had WWW access (Coley et al., 1997).

Technological resources abound for teachers of all subject areas and all grade levels, but for many reasons, such instructional technology seems to lend itself to the social studies at least as well as for any other subject area (Braun et al., 1998). Certainly this is true in the realm of economic education (Boldt et al., 1994). Leu, et al. (1997), however, found that many teachers who tried to employ the WWW in their teaching lacked the skills needed to efficiently use the resource. As a result, these teachers and their students often wasted time endlessly "surfing" the WWW for content-specific sites. In an attempt to aid the economic educator in using the WWW more efficiently and effectively in classroom instruction, this ERIC Digest provides an overview of WWW sites that can be used to improve instruction in K-12 economic education. This review will follow the major categories of WWW usage outlined by Leu et al., (1997) and others in this field: (1) The World Wide Web as a teacher resource, (2) The World Wide Web as a student resource, and (3) interactive World Wide Web-based lessons.

Instructional Resources for Teachers. Teachers who use the WWW as an instructional resource are interested in acquiring knowledge of economic concepts and principles (e.g., supply and demand, marginal cost, etc.) and in identifying instructional plans that might be used to teach these various economics concepts. The following WWW sites are excellent examples:

The National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) Website <http://nationalcouncil.org> provides descriptions of the National Council and its two outreach programs, EconomicsAmerica and EconomicsInternational. Readers can access an on-line version of the NCEE curriculum catalog and order materials. In addition, each of the 20 *Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics* (Meszaros 1997) can be printed or downloaded from a link at this site. These *Standards* include student performance benchmarks that outline what economic content should be covered at various grade levels.

EcEdWeb <http://ecedweb.unomaha.edu>, developed by the University of Nebraska at Omaha's (UNO) Center for Economic Education, is the most comprehensive economic education site on the WWW. EcEdWeb provides support for economics teachers across all grade levels in its "Economics Resources for K-12 Teachers" section. Here teachers can access curriculum materials, including lesson plans for teaching various economics concepts, suggestions for integrating the WWW into teaching, and useful Internet and WWW sites for developing both teacher and student background in economics. Perhaps the most useful aspect of EcEdWeb for economic educators is the link to the homepage for "Economics is Elementary," a course offered by the UNO Center for Economic Education. Here teachers can find the course reading list, links to other economics lessons and Web sites, and a variety of Web-based ideas for incorporating economics into the elementary grades.

CyberTeach <http://www.economicsamerica.org/econedlink/cyberteach/index.html> provides an overview of using the WWW to teach economics. Readers can access a guide that makes it easy for teachers to access web sites that inform and enliven any economics curriculum. These sites include information on basic web skills, provide examples of lessons that teach economic concepts, and give step-by-step instructions on how to construct economics lessons using the Internet.

CyberEconomics <http://ingrimayne.saintjoe.edu/econ/> is a multi-media site designed to provide an interactive supplement to a course on the principles of economics. The author of CyberEconomics has developed a complete, hypertext-based course in introductory microeconomic and macroeconomic concepts. Classroom teachers searching for answers to their economic content questions should begin their search here.

Informational Resources for Students. When students use the WWW to acquire knowledge and gather information, they can "expand their understanding of important concepts and communicate these ideas more effectively" (Leu, et al. 1997, 14). Indeed, one of the most powerful aspects of the WWW is its ability to provide access to the most up-to-date information available. Carr (1994) indicated that the use of current information about economics found in newspapers and magazines could enhance all students' understanding and appreciation of economics. Several of the following student resource sites provide access to, in some cases, up-to-the minute economic information.

USA Today's Economy Track <http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/econ0001.htm> provides students with practical articles and statistics on all aspects of the United States' economic conditions. Many of the charts and graphs can be downloaded and used to develop data analysis lessons.

Phillip J. VanFossen is an Assistant Professor of Social Studies Education at Purdue University. He is also the Assistant Director of the Purdue University Center for Economic Education.

Orley Amos' Pedestrian's Guide to the Economy <http://amos.bus.okstate.edu/guide/> was written and is maintained by a professor of economics at Oklahoma State University. Using simple, easy to understand terms, Professor Amos explains even very difficult economic concepts clearly. The text is hyper-linked to an on-line glossary of economic terms and the topics of the case studies discussed (education, professional sports, etc.) are all relevant to students' lives. An interesting feature of this site is the "self-test" on a variety of economic topics that readers can take, submit for corrections, and receive feedback on.

EconomicsMinute <http://www.economicsamerica.org/econedlink/minute/index.html> helps students explore the economics behind the news of the week. EconomicsMinute provides links to newspapers and news channels, classroom discussion questions, and suggested classroom activities, all of which can enhance current events discussions in any subject area.

Interactive Instructional Activities. The final category of WWW usage involves students going beyond simply using the WWW as an information resource and actually participating in on-line instructional activities. Perhaps the best model of this type of activity is the WebQuest (Dodge 1995). These interactive modules require students to complete a specific, content-oriented task for which all necessary resources are embedded in the on-line lesson using hypertext. Several of the examples listed below employ a modified WebQuest design.

NetNewsLine <http://www.economicsamerica.org/econedlink/newsline/index.html> is a recent addition to the NCEE Website and is co-sponsored by MCI. NetNewsLine features truly interactive Web-based lessons developed around timely topics in economics (e.g., the "economics" of professional sports). Students are given a variety of tasks — including conducting research and creating reports — all of which must be completed using WWW-based resources.

SMG 2000 <http://www.smg2000.org/> is an on-line simulation of the popular Securities Industry Association's Stock Market Game (Wood et al., 1992). SMG2000 is a new version of The Stock Market Game. Students are given a hypothetical account of $100,000 and enter their transactions using the Internet. Students can access their portfolios the following business day.

Escape from Knab <http://www.escapefromknab.com/index.html> is an on-line simulation in which students venture to planet Knab ("a strange and slimy place") and, in order to survive, must make a number of successful decisions after weighing various consequences. Because students must engage in cost-benefit analysis and allocate scarce resources, this simulation provides several economics-based teaching opportunities.

Conclusion. The WWW is a powerful resource for all economic educators and their students. This ERIC Digest has provided an overview of several WWW-based resources for teaching and learning K-12 economics. While this list is necessarily truncated, the sites presented here can be considered among the best and are certainly an excellent place for the neophyte user to begin.

References and ERIC Resources. The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1400 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from commercial reprint services.

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